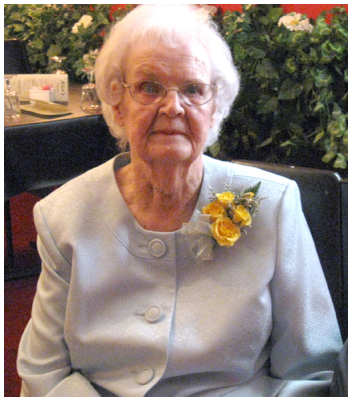

Marion Asplund, or “Aunt Mim” as she is known to family and friends, celebrated her 100th birthday July 23 at Alice’s Supper Club. Aunt Mim was born July 23, 1912, in Stambaugh, daughter of Olaf and August (Ruus) Asplund.

IRON RIVER—Citing family along with a healthy lifestyle for reaching this special milestone, Marion “Aunt Mim” Asplund celebrated her 100th birthday with some 80-plus family and friends on July 23 at Alice’s Supper club here.

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“I take it one day at a time,” said Aunt Mim, the youngest of eight children of Olaf and Augusta (Ruus) Asplund, who was born July 23, 1912, in the Dober Location, near where her fathered worked in the mine.

To most of her family, she’s best known as “Aunt Mim” or “Aunti Mimi,” thanks to a young nephew who couldn’t say Marion.

“So Mim was the closest, and it stuck.”

She attended Central School when the family lived on Genesee Street, she said, but a move to Division and M-189 had her and her siblings taking a short-cut past the railroad depot to attend the school in Stambaugh.

“We had to walk to school,” she said, “and went pass the railroad depot over the trestle and over the ‘red road’ to school.

“I’d run home for lunch, even in winter and had to go through all that snow,” she said.

“At the end of the trestle, there was a little road that went to the railroad track, and there was a little man delivering mail to the station in a wagon, but no horse.”

Iron River back then when the mines were active was a busy place, she said.

“Genesee Street was really busy. There were iron ore roads and not many cars.”

Skating and skiing were popular winter sports, she noted, but the equipment back then was definitely a challenge.

“The type of skates we had, you had to put them on over your shoes. Skis were leather straps and half the time, they would escape from you.”

In summer, at the end of the school year, the family lived out at Hagerman Lake where her brother had a cottage.

“My poor mother. No conveniences. People knew we were out there and would come to visit and mom would make them something to eat.”

Mim and her sister, Millie, would go fishing, and mom ended up cleaning the fish, she said.
“Two weeks before school, we came back to town.”
She liked school and liked her teachers, she said.
“My sister, Inez, taught in Stambaugh, so I had to behave.”
One thing that stands out in her memory after all these years were those penmanship lessons, a series of circles and slants that were aimed at improving a young student’s handwriting.
She also remembers those WPA days during the Depression, only for her and many young women, it wasn’t time at the CCC camps. It was time spent in the basement of Central School where they sewed and cut material for men’s shirts and some women’s clothing.
“For very little pay,” she noted.
That experience probably helped her with the counted cross-stitch gifts and “Hummel” pieces she created that now hang in her living room entrance.
After graduating from high school, Aunt Mim went to work in Chicago, taking the train to find work. During World War II, she worked at a defense plant on the general assembly line.
She then lived in Alabama for 38 years working in the school office in Foley, Ala., coming back to the Iron River area in 2000.
“It was the best move I made, back to God’s country,” said Aunt Mim.
During the intervening years, she spent a lot of time traveling, she said, and has traveled through or to most of the continental states and Canada. There was also a trip with some of her nieces and a tour group to Denmark, Sweden, Finland and Russia.
“But my traveling days are over,” she said.
Back home, Mim kept busy volunteering her time with the Hospital Auxiliary and still meets every Thursday with some of the women who were there.
Reading still remains one of her favorite pastimes, she said, and is active patron of the West Iron District Library.
“We’re very fortunate to have that library, I’ll tell you,” she said.
Sports are another favorite on her list. She’s a No. 1 fan of the Detroit Tigers, even when their pitchers struggle! She’s keeps an eye on college and professional football, and the Green Bay Packers are her favorite football team, she said.
She also keeps up to date on the current news, local, state or around the world, and works at least one crossword puzzle a day.
“There is one regret,” said Mim. “I don’t get to church anymore, but I do listen to the service on the radio.”